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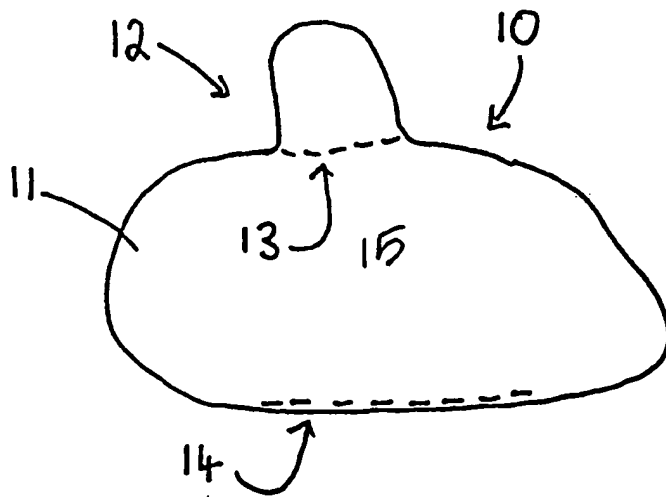
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(54) Title: A BEAN BAG WITH HEAD SUPPORT



(57) Abstract: A bean bag which has a main shapeless bag (11) partially filled with beans to allow the bag to have a fluid shape and on which a person can sit, and a head supporting bag (12) which is firmly attached to the main bag (11), the head supporting bag (12) being self-supporting and not shapeless, the fill in the head supporting bag (12) being unable to pass into the main shapeless bag (11).

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A BEAN BAG WITH HEAD SUPPORT

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a bean bag having additional support, inter alia, to provide safety for young children.

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BACKGROUND ART

Bean bags are well known and consist of a flexible bag or sack which is at least partially filled with beans. Originally, the bag was filled with beans such as navy beans, but more recently, artificial substitutes have been used, the most common being polystyrene beads.

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Throughout the specification and claims, the term "bean" is to include solid fluent substances such as polystyrene balls, beads, plant beans, rice, and other materials which are suitable for filling a bag to form a bean bag.

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The bag or sack is usually formed from cloth, canvas, nylon or other plastics, non-woven fabrics, woven fabrics and other types of flexible coverings which are strong enough to be sat on and handled, and which will keep the beans within the bag. For instance, ventilated bean bags are known where part or all of the bag covering is formed from a rather open mesh with the mesh pore diameter being substantially less than the size of the beans in the bag such that the beans cannot pass through or become entangled in the mesh.

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Bean bags are a popular form of furniture and are widely used as seats. The bean bags are especially popular with younger children, babies and toddlers because of their gentle support.

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Bean bags are only partially filled with beans and therefore have a fluid shape. That is, the bag is shapeless and has little, if any, ability to spring back to an original shape as is the case with a foam cushion or pillow. These bags, while supporting a person's bottom and lower body area, do not provide additional upper support such as a neck or head rest. This means that children, when leaning back in the bean bag, can tip over and strike their head on the hard ground. Head and neck injuries can result. Bean bags also suffer from the disadvantage that children when dropping or jumping into a

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bean bag, can roll straight out of the bag again with injury resulting.

Another disadvantage with shapeless bean bags is that they do not provide good posture to children or adults sitting in the bag. Over time, this can result in back pain or other injuries. This seems to be caused by the fluid nature of the bag which forms into a 'well' shape when sat on.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a particularly configured bean bag which seems to be able at least partially reduce possibility of injury occurring, and which may also be constructed in such a way to provide better posture to people sitting in the bag.

It is an object of the invention to provide a bean bag which may overcome at least some of the abovementioned disadvantages or provide the public with a useful or commercial choice.

In one form, the invention resides in a bean bag which has a larger or main shapeless bag partially filled with beans to allow the bag to have a substantially fluid shape and on which a person can sit, and a head supporting bag which is attached to the main bag and which is self-supporting and not shapeless, the fill in the head supporting bag being unable to pass into the main shapeless bag.

In another form, the invention resides in a bean bag with additional support comprising a first larger bean filled bag and a second smaller filled bag which is attached to the first bag.

In yet another form, the invention resides in a bean bag with a head support comprising a first larger bean filled bag to support a persons body, and a second smaller separately filled head supporting bag which is attached to the first bag, the fill in the second bag being unable to pass into the first bag, the second bag having a closeable filling opening which is pressed against the first bag when the two bags are attached.

The bean bag can be of various sizes depending on the intended use, but it is preferred that the bean bag of the invention is approximately the same size as bean bags which are already in the marketplace.

The bean bag has a first larger or main shapeless bag which is only partially filled with beans. Typically, about 10%-80% of the volume of the bag comprises the beans such that the bag is shapeless and has a fluid nature, and as described above, the beans may be of various types which are known in the marketplace. A preferred type of bean filling is polystyrene balls or beads, these being well-known and used in conventional bean bags.

The bag material of the larger bag can be of any type which is already known and used in bean bag manufacture and may include fabrics, plastics, canvas, and the like.

10 The second filled bag provides additional support to a person sitting in the bean bag. The second smaller bag can be filled with beans or can be filled or stuffed with other padding and/or cushioning material such as wadding, rags, rubbers, foams, gels, and the like.

The second bag is attached to the first bag and this can be in a removable or non-removable manner. For instance, in one form, the bean bag as a unitary bag structure where the second bag area can be tied off or otherwise separated from the first bag area. This can be done by a tie-off cord or chain. One possible disadvantage with this type of tying off arrangement however is that the second bag can hinge or "flop" relative to the first bag and this may reduce the supportability of the second bag. Alternatively, a dividing panel or other form or restrictive means can be provided between the first bag and the second bag to prevent the material from the two bags intermixing and providing better support. That is, it is preferred that the material in the first bag does not fall into or drain into the second bag which will reduce the supportability of the second bag.

25 The second bag can be attached to the first bag by a zip fastener, Velcro™ patches, press studs and the like, or can be stitched to the first bag. The second bag should be attached firmly to the first bag such that it does not fall off during normal use.

30 If the second bag is filled with beans, a dividing panel, dividing mesh, or other form of restriction is preferred to prevent the beans in the second bag from draining into the first bag. If the second bag is filled with

wadding or other type of material which does not readily fall into the first bag, the dividing panel may be omitted or modified.

The second bag is preferably dimensioned to provide head support for a child or person sitting in the bag. Additionally, the second bag
5 may be sized and configured to provide back support for a person sitting in the bag. The size of the second bag can vary to provide the additional support and typically the second bag is about 0.5 to 0.2 X the size of the first bag or smaller.

To provide guidance to the correct initial positioning of the bean
10 bag, and correct use of the bean bag, the second smaller filled bag may be decoratively shaped, for instance it may have a head portion to make it clear to a child that this second bag functions to support the child's head. Alternatively, or as well, the second bag may be decoratively shaped to make it clear that it can also support a person's back. Various different types of
15 decorative shapes or patterns can be used.

In one form, the shape of the second bag is such to support at least a person's head but preferably also to support the neck and/or upper shoulder region. It is found that a tapered bag shape is suitable which is broader where the bag attached to the larger bag and which tapers to a
20 narrower top.

The size difference between the first and second bags can vary, but typically the first bag is about 2 to 7 times as large as the second bag.

The first bag usually will have a closable opening to allow the bag to be filled or emptied. The closable opening is usually in the form of a
25 long zip. If the first larger bag has such a zip portion or other type of closable opening, the head supporting bag, in one form of the invention, is to be on a portion of the bag almost opposite to where the zip is. This arrangement allows the bean bag to be quickly positioned to make sure that the zip portion is on the floor (and therefore away from a person's legs), with the second bag
30 portion being on top of the bean bag (and therefore able to provide support to a person's head or back area).

The second bag can be centralised on the first bag (see figure

4) enabling a person to sit down from any direction and still benefit from the support. To centralise the second bag, the entire bean bag can be lifted off the ground by the top of the second bag and dropped down.

If the second bag has a closable opening, this can be in the
5 form of a zip, Velcro™ strips, buttons, press studs and the like. In one form of the invention, the second bag is formed separately from the first bag and the closable opening of the second bag is pressed against the first bag when the two bags are attached thereby hiding the closable opening from children.

If the second bag is formed separately and attached to the first
10 bag, this can be done by a number of convenient means including the use of Velcro™, buttons, zips, press studs and the like.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

An embodiment of the invention will be described with reference to the following drawings in which

15 Figure 1 illustrates a bean bag having a first larger bean filled bag and a second smaller bean filled bag, the two bags being formed integrally.

Figure 2 illustrates another embodiment of the invention where the bean bag has a larger bag and a smaller bag which are formed separately
20 and subsequently attached.

Figure 3 illustrates the safety feature of the bean bag by showing how the head portion can prevent injury.

Figure 4 illustrates a bean bag with a tapered smaller bag

Figure 5 illustrates a child sitting in the bean bag of Figure 4.

25 BEST MODE

Referring initially to Figure 1, there is shown a bean bag 10 having additional support and which consists of a first larger bean filled bag 11 and a second smaller filled bag 12 which is attached to the first bag 11. In this embodiment, bean bag 10 is formed as a shapeless bag which is made
30 from usual bag material and the first bag 11 is filled with the usual beans. The amount of fill is such to ensure that the bag is substantially fluid, has no particular shape and does not spring back to an initial shape (as with a

cushion). A fill of up to 80% may achieve this purpose. Second bag 12 is filled with beans, wadding or other material (it being appreciated that the second bag need not be filled with the same material as the first bag). Second bag 12 is firmly attached to the first bag 11 and this can be by
5 Velcro™ patches, a zip, press studs; or the bags can be stitched together, or formed as a unitary structure. To prevent the fill within second bag 12 from flowing into first bag 11, an internal panel 13 is provided. This can be stitched, glued, welded or otherwise attached in place. Bean bag 10 has a
10 lower zip opening 14 and the zip opening is usually along the bottom of the bean bag. Second filled bag 12 is on the top of bean bag 10, that is opposed to zip 14. This ensures that the bean bag can be correctly positioned on the ground. Second bag 12 is sized to provide head or back support to a child or adult sitting in the bag and preferably has a substantially extending and rounded shape as illustrated in Figure 1. Second bag 12 needs to be
15 sufficiently filled to provide good support to a person's head or back. Second bag 12 should be sufficiently self-supporting which can be achieved by sufficient filling of the bag.

In use, as a child sits in the main body area 15 of bag 11, second bag 12 will function as a good head or back support. It is also found
20 that as the child flops into the bean bag, the second bag 12 will adopt and upright erect position which can assist in posture control and head and back support. The shapeless nature of the larger bag has a bearing on the position of the smaller bag. Figure 5 illustrates a child sitting in the larger bag 20. By being fluid in nature, the bag is substantially depressed by the weight of the
25 child and forms a well shape 21. This causes the second bag 22 to spring up to an upright position. The second bag is difficult to push back because it is anchored to the first bag 20 and provides a good degree of support to the child. Figure 4 illustrates the bag of figure 5 before it is sat on.

Figure 2 illustrates an embodiment where second bag 12 is
30 formed separately from first bag 11 and can be attached to first bag 11 through attachment flaps 16 and fasteners 17. Figure 2 also shows that the closable opening 18 in second bag 12 (usually a zip fastener), is positioned

between flap 16 such that opening 18 is pressed against first bag 11 when the two bags are attached.

Figure 3 shows how second bag 12 can function to cushion a child's head and neck area should the child tip the bag over in the direction of the arrow 19, it being appreciated that without second bag 12, the child's head or neck could be knocked hard against the ground.

In a particular embodiment, the larger bag has a height before filling of about 70 to 100cm and a width of about 70cm. Approx 500g of beans are used in the larger bag. The smaller bag is firmly stuffed with toy filling which is known in the art.

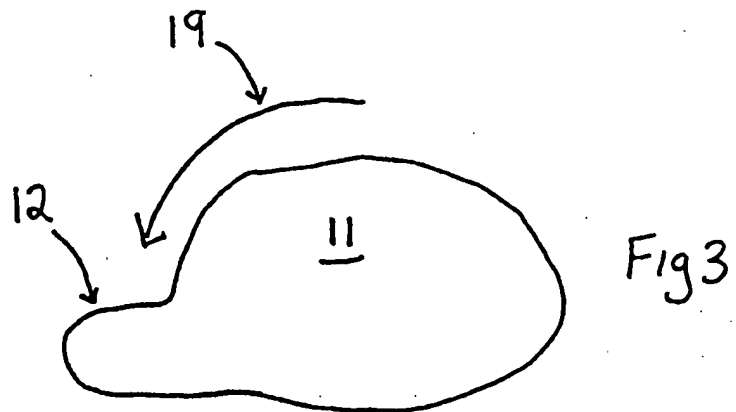
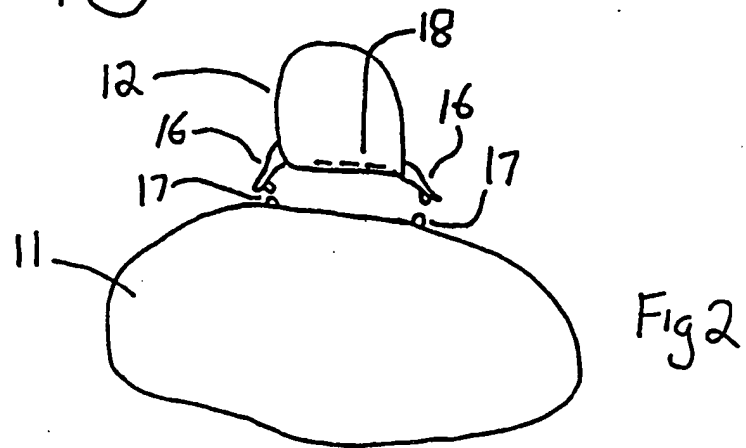
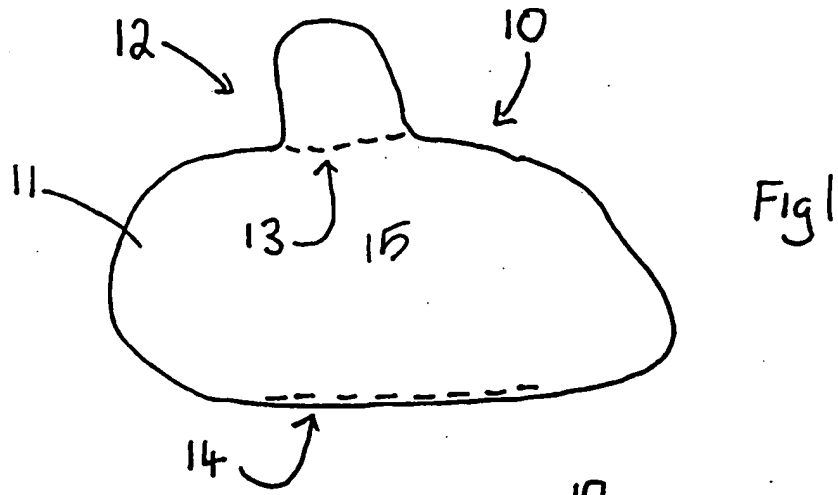
The bean bag can have the second bag decoratively shaped such as in the form of a caricature which acts as a back and head rest and support. The bean bag according to the invention, is more comfortable and possibly more stylish than conventional bean bags and has more shape and definition. Attachments can be added to the bean bag to provide a greater degree of security when being used by a child, these attachments possibly including side attachments and the like.

It should be appreciated that various other changes and modifications may be made to the embodiment described without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as claimed.

If the two bags are formed separately, the top of the larger bag is affixed to the bottom of the smaller bag around the corresponding outer edges of both bags. This prevents the smaller head bag from flopping or hinging relative to the other bag and provides a good firm attachment.

CLAIMS:

1. A bean bag which has a main shapeless bag partially filled with beans to allow the bag to have a fluid shape and on which a person can sit, and a head supporting bag which is firmly attached to the main bag, the head supporting bag being self-supporting and not shapeless, the fill in the head supporting bag being unable to pass into the main shapeless bag.
2. The bean bag of claim 1, wherein the head supporting bag is integral with the main bag and includes an internal panel separating the head supporting bag from the main bag.
3. The bean bag of claim 1, wherein the head supporting bag is separate from the main bag and is firmly attached to the main bag.



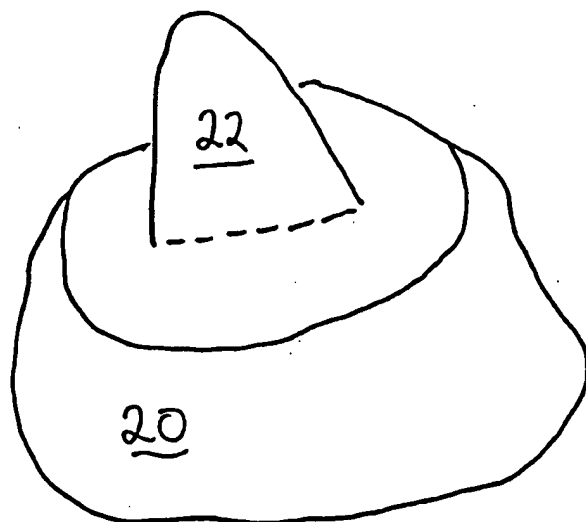


Fig 4

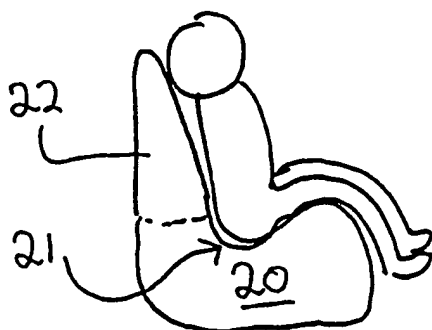


Fig 5

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/AU 99/00552

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER		
Int Cl ⁶ : A47C 5/00, 7/38, 27/00, 3/16		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) A 47 C 5/00, 27/-		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched AU : IPC as above		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) WPAT : A47C and bean:		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
L,E,X	AU 94066/98 (707278) B (McDonald) 8 July 1999. (document may throw doubts on priority claim(s))	1 - 3
X	US 4171549 A (MORRELL) 23 October 1979 column 4 lines 50 - 68	1 - 3
X	US 4179158 A (FLAUM) 18 December 1979 Figs	1 - 3
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